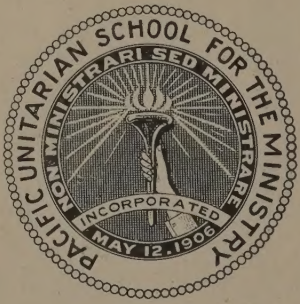
The Story of Dr. Channing

Frances E. Cooke



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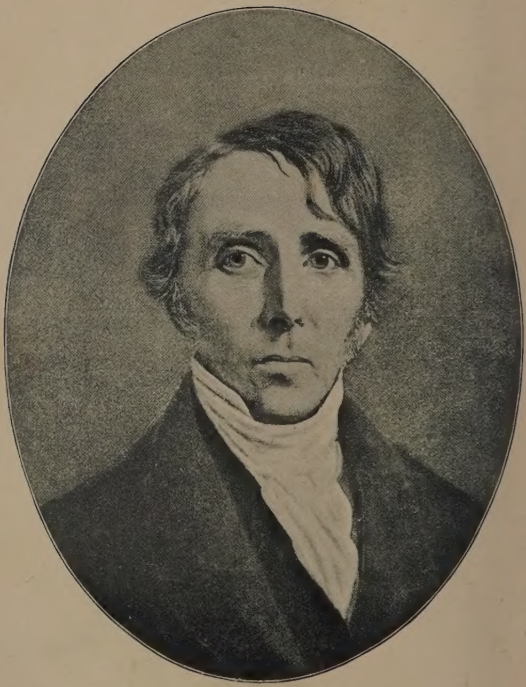

DR. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

Born 7th April, 1780. Died 2nd Oct., 1842.

THE STORY

OF

DR. CHANNING

BY

FRANCES E. COOKE

'Do not silence the whispers of the soul.'
DR. CHANNING.

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TO THE

REV. W. H. CHANNING

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS INSCRIBED WITH
GRATEFUL MEMORIES

1200

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The Story of Dr. Channing.

CHAPTER I.

THE ISLAND HOME.

ON the coast of North America lies Rhode Island, seventeen miles in length, separated by Narragansett Bay from the mainland, whereon the larger portion of the State of Rhode Island extends. To the south and east the island lies open to the waves of the Atlantic Ocean. They ripple softly in the sunshine in its sheltered creeks, and break foaming, in stormy weather, on its bold cliffs with a roar that can be heard plainly in Newport, the chief town on the Island.

A hundred years ago, between the shore and the town lay green fields, where old windmills spread their sails to the breeze, and grey stone farm-houses nestled among storm-bent trees. Sometimes, in autumn and winter, sea mists came

up and hid these land-marks. Then travellers were glad when they suddenly heard the whirring sound of the wheels and ropes on the rope-walk, for they knew they were near the outskirts of a town. In fine weather there was a grand view from those fields far over the blue ocean as far as eye could see; and there was no more tempting place in Rhode Island than the long reach of shore where winds and waves made music all day long.

Once upon a time, Newport was a quiet, sleepy place. Some of its richer inhabitants kept slaves, others made and sold spirits, and few of them asked themselves the question whether their ways of life were right or wrong. Suddenly, however, a great shock wakened the old town to new life. The stormy period of the Revolution came, and during the war between England and America, British soldiers took possession, for a time, of Newport. War always leaves some evil traces behind it. When the army at length withdrew many of the chief buildings had been destroyed, and a new set of profane, lawless citizens had taken the place of old dwellers who had left the town.

But at that time, in the year 1780, a square, wooden house still stood unhurt in Newport, under the shadow of an old sycamore tree. In this house lived a lawyer, named William Channing. He was one of the chief men of the town whom the arrival of British soldiers had *not* sent away. The house

was a comfortable dwelling, fit for a large family; it had two windows on each side of its front door, five above, and many more behind, and on each side. At the back lay a field and sunny garden—places where children might play merrily, and see none of the traces of war and wickedness in the town which made the hearts of many older people ache.

The lawyer and his wife had already two little children, a boy and a girl, named Francis and Ann, when on April 7th, 1780, a new baby was added to the family. They called him William after his father, and Ellery because that had been his mother's maiden name.

Mr. Channing was held in great respect in Newport, and was chosen to fill public offices of trust, among others, that of Attorney-General of Rhode Island. He was a busy man, for he had many interests beyond his work as a lawyer. Strangers used to make inroads on his time, as well as old friends whom he had known all his life. But he was never too busy to attend to all, and yet the wants of his home were not neglected. As his wife's cares increased, and she often grew weary and anxious, he never seemed tired, but bore her burdens, and was always full of hope and sunshine.

The mother of the children was a warm-hearted, true woman, loving and generous in word and deed to all who were just and acted rightly, but if she saw a wrong deed done or heard a false word said,

however small they might be, she never kept silence and let matters seem all right, but boldly spoke out her thoughts. No wonder the changes in Newport seemed sad changes to her, and no wonder she was afraid lest her boys should be led astray by the bad examples they might meet with in the town as they grew older and passed out of her constantly watchful care.

It seemed only a short time before the 'new baby,' whose story is now to be told, was playing in the safe-sheltered garden with his brother and sister; then came plans for his first school. While he was still thought too small to toddle through the streets by himself he was carried, on wet days, by a coloured servant to a school-house, where an old lady taught other young children of Newport their first lessons. The tiny boy, as he grew older and wiser, began to wonder at the strange things he saw—at the old schoolmistress, with her two pairs of spectacles on her nose, and the long pole by her side with which she poked at unruly pupils in distant corners of the room, and at the odd tricks of the scholars who tried to make him as idle and as full of nonsense as they were themselves. But this they could not do, and the poor schoolmistress used sometimes to wish that the wayward boys, who tired her so much, were more like little William Channing. Still, no one yet dreamed that this small scholar was to grow up so noble a man as to make Newport in Rhode

Island famous because it was the place of his birth.

At this time he was a fair-haired, good-tempered, tender-hearted little lad, whom everybody liked, and who cared for the dumb creatures about his father's garden, making pets of young downy birds, feeding them with crumbs, and crying bitter tears if an untimely fate befel his nurselings. So there, in the Newport boy, lay the germ of the sympathy that afterwards helped to make his character so fine when a man. But saints and heroes have to be brave as well as tender-hearted, and already in little Channing's slight form lay a courage which the rough bullies of Newport did not possess.

One day he chanced to see a blustering tyrant ill-use a weak boy much smaller than himself, when he thought no defender was at hand. At the sight all fear for his own safety was lost in anger at the mean, cruel deed, and the pretty, curly-headed little lad ran up to defend the child who was being hurt. 'Did you strike that little boy?' he cried.

'Yes, what then?' was the rough reply.

'Then,' said little Channing, 'you are a coward, because he was no match for you, and now I'm going to whip you for doing it.'

In the end, the tyrant was beaten. Perhaps in this rough manner he learned a lesson of justice and fair play. But it was the last time that William Channing ever fought, for he found better ways of settling quarrels than by hasty blows.

A little way from Mr. Channing's house, and parted from it by the railings of his garden, stood the dwelling of Dr. Hopkins, the minister, to whom the children, in common with other boys and girls of Newport, said the catechism every Sunday. So near was the house, that William Channing, waking up on a dark winter's night, could see the light of their neighbour's lamp still burning as he sat reading through the quiet hours. Then the boy used to wonder whether the minister was still busy writing the sermons that seemed to last so long on Sunday mornings. Very little of those sermons could he understand, and perhaps even the older listeners were tired and puzzled by them sometimes.

The meeting-house, as the church in those days were called, was a plain, dreary-looking old building with two windows that rattled in the wind, a gallery and high-backed pews. It had been roughly used by the English soldiers when they were quartered in Newport, and there was no beauty to be found anywhere about it. It lay a little distance from the town across the fields ; and we will hope that the fresh sea winds and bright sunshine sometimes made their way in through the open doorway, and gave the people happy, thankful thoughts to mix with the dreary doctrines which the good old Doctor preached.

For those were the days when the hard, narrow creed which the Pilgrim Fathers had brought with

them from England, was still held. Though it must be mentioned here that, in some points, Dr. Hopkins's teachings had a somewhat wider and gentler spirit than those of many preachers. Still, among other doctrines, people were told that this beautiful world was cursed by an angry God, and that all the dwellers on it, except a chosen few, were corrupt and altogether lost and sinful from their birth. By-and-by, as will be seen, little Channing learned to wonder how those Puritans could have loved their strange, cruel faith so dearly. Meanwhile, at this time he knew little of creeds, and when he heard the story of the true, self-denying Pilgrim Fathers, his heart grew warm at the news of how they had left home and friends, and all that was dear to them in the old world, rather than pretend to believe what seemed to them untrue, or worship God in a way they thought not right. He could look across the waves that broke on his own island, and picture those brave-hearted Puritans landing 200 years before, from the stormy wintry sea, on the lonely Plymouth rock, that lay far away to the north of his own home. So the children of Rhode Island might turn their thoughts to the brave days of old, and learn from them to shun the evil ways of Newport, and all William Channing knew about the Pilgrim Fathers as yet were the truth and honesty that made their lives so grand.

'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,'

says the proverb. To make him a happy one, however, he must not have all play and no work. In the Channings' home every one was busy. Though there was plenty of fun to be had in the sunny garden and breezy field, there was hard work to be done there also. The children had garden tools given to them and seeds to sow. They had walks to weed, plants to water, and flower-beds to dig up; and at the right time all this business must be done, or the idle gardeners went supperless to bed. So the spirit of the Puritan forefathers came down into this island home, and brought with it a love of order in the smallest things, and a contempt for shirking and shams in the humblest work.

Truly, it was a happy life these children led. They knew how to play heartily, as well as how to work heartily, and their merry laughter sounded through the garden as they played hide-and-seek among the trees and ran races on the smooth turf. Only in one way did the grave joyous spirit, which was also a part of the Puritan legacy from old times, descend upon them. Sunday in New England was always somewhat of a gloomy, dreary day, with its catechism and long services; and for the children no walk, but the straight, stiff march to the 'meeting-house' and back. Perhaps it was as a protest to this dull mode of life on Sundays that William Channing, when a little lad, used to call his brothers and sisters and other small boys and girls together by blows on a warming-pan, till they gathered

round him on the door steps or in a little empty room. Then he preached to them a sermon on some story in the Bible, and the small flock listened to the young preacher, and found his words more to their liking than had been the long discourse to which they had gone with their elders in the morning.

CHAPTER II.

A SCHOOLBOY'S PUZZLES.

IN Newport lived the grandparents of the little Channings. Their mother's father was the Hon. William Ellery. He had been in Congress for some years, and no one ever forgot that when the Independence of the United States had been declared in the year 1776 he had signed the declaration as a delegate from the colony of Rhode Island. So he was known by the name of William Ellery, 'the signer.' Above all else in the world, Mr. Ellery cared for honesty of purpose and noble principles. He was a man who loved plain living and high thinking, and he shrank from the gay fashions and intemperate ways of the rich new settlers in Newport.

His grandchildren were very dear to him, and his words and ways influenced them greatly. At his house statesmen and famous people from the mainland often met. For, when they visited Rhode Island, his old friends, who had known him in college and public life, never failed to seek

him out. So the young Channings used to see, at their grandfather's house, men whose famous names were in their own home as household words, and they learned to look with reverence on them from the first.

Their *father's* old home was also in Newport, and the grandfather, who lived here, was Mr. John Channing, a merchant in the town. Like most other well-to-do people in Newport he had once owned slaves; but when the war with England was over he changed old customs and gave freedom to them all. Some of the slaves, however, loved their master and their old home too dearly to leave Newport. These faithful coloured servants, thus set free, seemed always like old friends to Francis, Ann, and William Channing.

One of them the children only knew by the name of 'the Duchess.' She kept a little shop in Newport, where she sold cakes and sometimes gave a feast, and invited all the grandchildren of her old master. Those were fine times for the young Channings. But the Duchess had gone through much trouble; and, like most people who have done so, she had a deep, true nature. So the boys and girls who ate her cake learned also to respect her hard-working life, and her honest, truthful ways and words.

There was a quiet room in Newport, too, where the children were always welcome. It seemed to them full of sunshine, though an invalid aunt lived there who was shut out from the busy life of the out-

side world. She had time to hear and enjoy their tales of fun and adventure. Yet into their active minds came a gentle, tender feeling for her, which made the memory of the hymns she taught them, and the quiet visits to her room, sacred to them in after years.

Nor are all the people yet mentioned who influenced these children in their early days. A welcome visitor sometimes came to their father's house, whose face and form stayed in their remembrance long after he had passed away from earth. This was the Rev. Dr. Stiles, who was afterwards President of Yale College. The little Channings were too young to understand all he said; but in some way they felt his wisdom and goodness, and were filled with reverence for the spirit which showed itself in all his looks and deeds.

Time passed, and more children were added to the lawyer's family. A younger brother by-and-by took William's place in the old Dame's school, and wondered, as he had done at first, at the long rod and the old lady's spectacles. William was sent to another school in Newport, and found himself among rough companions, with much older ways and ideas than those of his first schoolfellows. But they made him welcome amongst them, newcomer and young as he was, for he was full of fun and energy. They soon saw that he was ready for any sport, and fit to be chosen captain in their deeds of daring. He was willing to join in the

wild games of play in the school-ground, to race and wrestle on the common, and even to climb the tall masts of the ships lying in the harbour near the town.

But these Newport schoolboys found out another thing about William Channing. They soon learned that he would never join in any deed, nor listen to any word that was wrong. *There* he was always firm ; and boys who laughed at him at first, in the end respected him, and tried to follow his example.

In this school, as in many others, the boys gave nick-names to each other. Little Channing had two such titles ; but they were names to be proud of. His companions called him 'the peace-maker,' for he had a way of stopping quarrels and making enemies into good friends. Yet no one dared to call him a coward, or to fancy that he had not spirit enough to fight for the right, *if he found no better way of defending it.*

His other name was 'William the Silent,' because, though so full of fun and daring, he used to like to take long walks alone, or to fly his kite upon the beach with only winds and sea-birds for his companions.

One of his greatest friends at school was a boy named Washington Allston, older than himself, and taller and stronger also. But, notwithstanding his smaller form and fewer years, William was always the leader, and the older boy looked up to the younger with respect, and followed his advice in many ways.

It came about that when young Channing had been some time in the school all profane and bad words, which some of the rougher boys of Newport had been apt to use, were stopped when he came near. Yet this strange influence of his was so quiet and secret that the boys hardly knew it was among them; and if they had been asked what sort of character William Channing bore at school, perhaps they might only have replied, 'Oh, he's a jolly fellow—up to all kinds of games and fun.'

Like most of the other scholars in his new school, William began to learn Latin. This was no easy work to him. Often in the long summer evenings, when sunshine was flooding the garden with golden light, he had to spend weary hours over the lessons that gave little trouble to some of his schoolfellows. It was a hard task to sit patiently poring over the book when the sound of merry voices came through the open window and told him that his brothers and sisters were at play.

At length, one day, a clerk in his father's office pitied the hard-working, patient little scholar. What a cheerful sound his words had when he said, 'Come, Bill, they say you're a fool; but I know better. Bring me your grammar and I'll soon teach you Latin.'

It was wonderful what a little timely help did. By-and-by William knew as much Latin, thanks to his steady, plodding ways, as boys who had been learning much longer than himself. Before long

his father said of him, 'We expect much from our son William, and flatter ourselves we shall not be disappointed.' It was an old-fashioned, measured speech; but the boy's heart bounded with joy when he heard it. From that time, at all events, he grudged none of the summer evenings that had been spent over his dreary Latin books.

Holidays came, and the children, full of life and fun, made the house and garden ring with their merry voices. Perhaps the tired mother's head ached sometimes, and her strong, active boys never guessed that she would have been glad of a little rest and quietness. But the watchful father knew it; and, always ready to bear her burdens, he used sometimes to make plans whereby one or two of the merry-makers were carried off, and at the same time made happy by the change.

It was grand news to William one night that next morning he should go a long drive with his father—just they two together. They were to go along the country roads of the Island to a village some distance from Newport. There, many people were daily meeting to listen to the startling sermons of a famous preacher. This preacher Mr. Channing also wished to hear.

Probably the school boy cared little for the preacher or his sermon; but he was proud to be chosen as his father's companion, and the long drive was a fair prospect to him. It was an anxious moment when he first awoke next morning till he

knew that the bright sunshine promised a fine day. After breakfast the chaise came to the door, and away went the two travellers amid the farewells of the other children.

What a pleasant journey that was! Sometimes their way led them by the common, sometimes by shady lanes. Every now and then they had a view of the blue ocean in the distance, and always the fresh wind blew sweet scents and sounds to them as they went on their way.

At length the church was reached. When they had seen the horse put into safe shelter they went in at the open door and found places among the waiting crowd. Many other persons had come even longer distances than they. Carriages and carts of all sorts were standing in the lane, and tethered horses were feeding quietly close at hand. Wearied men and women, who had walked many miles, were seated in the large old-fashioned pews resting from their journey, and waiting for the arrival of the preacher.

A crowded church was, no doubt, a common sight to him. He was a man whose sermons roused people wherever he went, and a 'revival' took place in each sleepy village where he preached. So when at last this preacher came into the pulpit, all the tired people roused themselves, and each one was wide-awake and ready to listen.

William Channing looked round on the people, and, among many strange faces, he saw those of

sailors from Newport, rough men who rarely went to church; of farmers and their wives, and of little children sitting beside their mothers. He saw, also, thoughtful men like his own father. Whether he would or not he must listen when the sermon began. The preacher's hands beat the pulpit cushion, and his voice rose and fell with excitement. How unlike the quiet ways of Dr. Hopkins in the meeting-house at Newport!

They were strange words that now fell on little Channing's ears, telling of doctrines that were common enough, however, in America in those days. Happily, until that morning, these doctrines had never been heard so plainly by the boy, who then learned from the fiery preacher that the bright, happy earth was cursed by God. Not only so, all the people on it, men, women, and little children, were sinners from their birth and enemies to God, except a very few, 'the elect' the preacher called them. They were saved by the sacrifice of Christ, but all the rest were doomed after death to eternal misery and torture.

The loud voice of the preacher filled the church as he poured forth this dreary sermon to the listening crowd. Perhaps the little Newport boy looked around him and wondered who were 'the elect.' Then all the people rose up to sing a hymn and praise the Lord. 'If all this be true, why should they praise Him?' thought the boy. To think of the Lord and of the dreadful future filled his heart

with fear, and when they went out of the church into the bright sunshine again, he wondered how the neighbours could speak so cheerfully to each other. It was strange to hear some one say to his father, 'Sound doctrine that, sir!' as they passed on their homeward way. Stranger still to hear his father whistle as they drove along.

Back through the shady lanes and by the sunny common. The wind was just as fresh and sweet as when they went that way in the early morning; the birds' songs were as clear, and the ocean views as bright. But now all seemed changed. Was it really cursed, this Rhode Island of theirs, with its fresh green grass and flowers, its broad beach and grand ocean waves? And did that dreadful fate, of which the preacher spoke, perhaps await himself and all whom he loved?

One hundred years ago in New England there was less freedom of speech between young people and their elders than is common in our own days. 'William the Silent' kept these thoughts to himself. He saw his father read the newspaper as usual when they reached home. All things went on as before. By degrees his fears faded away, and he said to himself that the strange preacher did not mean all he said, and that no one really believed his words. One thing William thought was certain—that people should be careful to say no more than they meant, and speak only their true thoughts.

Then the days went on as usual. School and work began again, but life had some puzzles now for this thoughtful boy. The startling words of the preacher came back now and then to his memory, and he began to find that many people about him held somewhat the same stern faith.

Surely Newport *was* a wicked place, with its slave trade, and drunkenness, and swearing. Even the boys in the town followed the example of their elders, and fell into evil ways. Yet there were brave and noble souls doing golden deeds in the midst of this darkness. Could it be true that they were wicked from their birth, perhaps not among 'the elect' at all?

In Newport was a preacher known by the name of 'Father Thurston,' a good man, who did his best to help every one, and tried earnestly to cure the widely spread love of drink that was doing such harm in the town. He was very poor, and earned a scanty living by working hard as a cooper, and making casks and tubs all the week. One day, he learned that the vessels he fashioned were used to carry the wine and spirits that brought so much trouble into the homes of the people to whom he preached on Sundays. Then 'Father Thurston' made a stand. Faithful to his conscience in little things, for the future he would only make milk pails and water casks, and, of course, by keeping to this rule he lost a large part of his former gains. William Channing heard this story. He heard,

too, stories of many other noble, faithful deeds done by other people about him in Newport, and they made him think better of human nature than the popular faith taught him to think.

So there were all kinds of influences acting on this boy in his island home from the past, and also from the life that went on around him. And the sea-shore, with the grand waves rolling in upon its rocks, helped also to form his character. But, best of all, the whispers in his own soul brought him truer messages than the preacher of those days knew how to give.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOW IN THE MEADOW.

NEWPORT was a little world in itself, with its harbour and its foreign trade, its old and new settlers, and the strangers who came each summer to enjoy the beauties of its sea and beach. Yet a time arrived when better training than Newport could afford must be found in the wider world outside to fit William Channing for his future work in life.

Now, on the mainland, in the State of Massachusetts, near its chief town, Boston, stood Harvard College,[1] famous in those days, when colleges were scarce, for the wise men it sent forth into the world. And to Harvard William Channing was to go, and there prepare, so it was planned, to take up his father's profession of the Law. But first he must spend some months in study, and it was agreed that, for this purpose, he should go for a time to live with an uncle, who was minister of a church in New London, Connecticut, who would

[1] Not made a University till later.

read with him and prepare him for his future College work.

Then came the first parting from home. Francis was away already, a student in Harvard College, but there were still seven brothers and sisters to say good-bye to, as well as father and mother, and a host of other friends. Every one was sorry to lose William. His schoolfellows knew they would long miss his merry laughter and daring in their games, and older people had learned to respect, even in this boy of twelve, his thoughtful, high-principled ways. As for his mother, she most of all grieved to part with the son who was always to be trusted. But the time had come when she *must* let him go out into the world.

His uncle's house was like a second home to William. His lessons were both harder and longer than those to which he had been used in Newport school; but he worked at them with a will. When they were learned, there were some merry cousins as young as, and younger than himself, ready for fun and adventure, who soon cared for him as much as if he had been always one of themselves. And in this new life the boy's deeper thought and quiet ways (which had gained for him at school the name of 'William the Silent') had also food.

So a busy year passed away. Suddenly, at the end of the year, a sad summons came to him. News of his father's illness was sent from Rhode Island, and no time was to be lost in making the

journey home. How long the way seemed! Worse news met him near the end. The good father was dead; and the happy home that William had left only a few short months before was now full of trouble. A day or two more, and then up through the narrow streets of Newport passed the sad funeral procession to the cemetery on the breezy hill side.

The younger children watched the long train of mourners from the windows of a neighbour's house. They saw their mother with their two eldest brothers walking at the head, and they hardly knew what it all meant. But on that sad day William seemed to himself to have grown years older. He felt no longer like the young boy with manhood far out of sight. How much now lay upon Francis and himself. They must help and comfort their poor sad mother, left with nine children, and without her husband's tender care. What were they to do? So many years must pass before they could earn money or make a home for her. The two boys made plans together for that distant future, and in their planning a mutual love and trust arose, such as boys so young rarely feel for those of their own age.

The clever Newport lawyer, with his large family and many claims, had been able to save very little money. It was plain that his widow would find it no easy matter to make ends meet. But relatives were ready to help her to educate her

sons, and William knew that to pass well at College was the only way at present in which he could be of use to his mother. So, with a strong will to do his best, yet with a sad heart, he left home again and went back for a time to his uncle's house in Connecticut. In the year 1794, when he was fourteen years old, he began his college life at Harvard.

The world was opening wider to the Rhode Island boy, and many fresh experiences awaited him. The first sight of the famous College was a great event. At that time there were about 170 students there. It did not take him very long to enter into the life of the place, to know all about its various clubs and societies, the Professors, and the daily work. He was only a very young freshman; but he was soon known among his new companions and made welcome by them. For there was something very winning and genial about William Ellery Channing, and the students of Harvard found out, as the school-boys at Newport had done, that there was plenty of life and energy in him.

Before long these youths found also what a strong will and hard work could do. The new student was making a name for himself. Love for his mother spurred him on. He outstripped older men in his classes. The Professors began to prophesy a great future for him. The young student was pointed out with pride by his com-

panions. Harvard would surely send out a famous lawyer in William Channing, and he bade fair to become a popular favourite, notwithstanding the silent and sad moods that sometimes visited him. But on William's side there was something to prevent his taking the place of popular leader and favourite at Harvard. To explain why he could not do so will lead us far beyond the College walls.

Eighteen years had passed since William Channing's grandfather, with other delegates to Congress, had signed the great Act declaring the independence of their country. War with England was over, and the United States at this time passed their own laws and chose their own President. All the land was in peace. But across the ocean came tidings from the old world of such terrible tumults as America had never known. The French Revolution had broken out; and in France the longing for liberty had sunk into wild licence. All law and order were lost. In the maddened minds of men had arisen a contempt for what was true and holy. There was no longer any reverence for the past, and loyalty and justice had given way before the wicked passions of the time. So, in religious matters, faith was shaken and unbelief took its place.

Across the ocean to America, with the tidings of the Revolution, came this evil spirit that followed in its wake. Even within the quiet walls

of Harvard the influences of this doubt and unbelief entered, just as wild storms at sea make themselves felt even on the waters of the sheltered inland bay. The minds of many Harvard students became unsettled, and as they had no longer any fixed and steady principles to guide them, they were ready to fall, and did fall, into foolish and even wicked ways of life.

So the new student, William Channing, with his true soul and better aims, shrank from some of the companions that pressed round him at Harvard, and knew that he could not find his closest and best friends among them.

Just at this time, Washington Allston, William's old schoolfellow, came to Harvard, and their boyish friendship was renewed. In the same class as himself, too, was a youth named Joseph Tuckerman. Full of fun and mischief, Tuckerman was no hard worker like William Channing; and in after years he used to look back with sorrow on the time he had wasted in his college life. Perhaps people who knew them both wondered what drew the two youths together. The fact was that deep down in Joseph Tuckerman's nature, beneath all his fun and idleness, there was a true and earnest spirit lying hidden, which was to waken before much time had passed and lead him to a nobler life.

Many of the students of Harvard University did not live within its walls. William was among the number. Judge Dana, whose pleasant house

was not far away, was his uncle, and for the time he found a home there. The walk to and from college each day, through the lonely fields and lanes, gave grand time for thought; and sometimes, as he went on his way, William used to practise speaking aloud to prepare himself to do so with ease when he became a man. On his road he used to pass the lodging of Washington Allston. Often when college work was over for the day he used to go in there, and the two friends talked together over the many questions that puzzled them, while time passed away unheeded.

Now, as in the world of college life William Channing formed for himself a little circle of chosen friends, so from the history of the past he chose out grand heroes to be his patterns and leaders. And among the old Greeks and Romans he used to read again and again of the brave men who, with no thought of self, spent their strength in noble deeds, and were ready to die for their country. Very strange did it seem to him to turn from these unselfish, high-minded heroes, to listen to the talk about character and motives for action that was common in his own day. 'Human nature is wicked—doomed because of Adam's sin,' said the preachers. 'Men are guided in all they do by self-love,' said the French philosophers; and 'there is nothing to help and teach us but our own senses and the world we see around us,' said the blind, groping doubters of the time. Strange

that men should lead such grand, noble lives, and heroes and saints be found in the world if this were all true!

Such notions are like bad dreams which pass away when daylight comes! And daylight was at hand for William Channing's puzzled mind. Happily, there were other teachers and other philosophers with other tales to tell.

One day he went into the meadows near Judge Dana's house. As he walked beneath the sheltering willow trees he read a book that had been written by an English philosopher seventy years before. Far in the distance lay dim, purple hills, and sunshine and shadow chased each other over his pages. All was quiet and peaceful. As he read, a light broke in upon his mind which seemed to change the scene around him to one of heavenly beauty. For the writer of the book turned from the outside world of matter and the things we see and touch to tell of great ideas of truth and right and unselfish love, which God has created to last for ever, and has planted in the human soul.

William Channing turned from the book to listen to the voice that spoke within him. From that moment the sure belief came to him that God is perfect and all-loving, and that men are made in His image to become saints and heroes—not doomed to wrath, and cast away from Him. Like the shell which is fabled to contain within it sounds of the ocean home from which it came, so the

whispers of his conscience were the echoes of God's thoughts, and he *knew* there was an open way between the Heavenly Father and His children on earth.

Here was an end to the dark creed the Puritans had left behind them, and to the gloomy doubts of the Revolution time. On that summer day in the sunny meadow, a new ideal was born in William Channing's mind; and though he was only a boy, he saw the work of his future life lie clearly before him. He must spread abroad this truth of the grandeur of the human soul; and if in men's blindness there seemed to them only a closed way between their souls and God, he must try and show them their mistake.

The sunlight died away; the purple hills faded out of sight, and a cold wind blew over the meadow. William Channing woke from his vision to find himself only a poor student at Harvard, and a fatherless youth with a life of care before him. How could *he* teach this new ideal to the world? But the moment of doubt passed quickly away. Before he left the meadows he vowed to lead a life worthy of the great thoughts that had come to him.

Grand aims and ideals visit youths and maidens everywhere. No strange event had happened to William Channing. But, in some cases, the grand ideals fade away as the purple hills and golden sunlight faded on that summer afternoon. With

young Channing this was not the case. His were no idle dreams. He had found out what his life's work was to be, and he set his mind from that time on doing it. College work went on as before. For his mother's sake, and to make the best of his own character and powers, he never wasted an hour. Yet he was merry and full of life as ever, and when he *did* at rare times join the college parties he was the life of the company. But there was always a steady principle behind all he said and did, and his quiet influence ever made itself felt. *He* had no fear of ridicule. When the jovial students saw he took no wine at their suppers, they ended in honouring him for this and for other brave examples that he set.

At length he said good-bye to college. All whom he left behind him at Harvard were of opinion that William Channing would make a famous name for himself in the law.

CHAPTER IV.

DREAMING AND WORKING.

A WEALTHY man of the name of Randolph was living, in the year 1798, in the town of Richmond, in Virginia. He held a high office, that of Marshal of the State, and his pleasant home was often visited by statesmen and people of renown. Within view from his house lay a wide valley through which the River James flowed, and groves of various trees made it gay in summer and autumn with the rich colouring of their leaves.

Round the house itself lay a large garden and plantation, kept in order by the slaves whom Mr. Randolph owned, and whose huts stood only at a short distance from the house, but hidden from its windows. Truly it was a pleasant place to live in, and his large family of boys thought so as they climbed the trees and raced over the hills in summer time, or skated on the ponds when the land was white with snow. But in this Southern State schools were scarce, and Mr. Randolph, as his boys grew older, was anxious to find a tutor who would

be able to train the merry company and give them a love of something better than sport.

Now it happened that in the summer of 1798, when young Channing came back from Harvard to his mother's house, Mr. Randolph travelled from his home in Virginia to Newport, that he might enjoy for a time the beauties of the famous Rhode Island coast. By that time, as we know, William had settled on his work in life. He was not to be a lawyer. He must be a preacher, and give his message to the world. But to this end he must return to college and study Divinity; and of one thing he was certain, he would not live, while he was doing so, upon his mother's much-needed money. So he must begin to earn himself, and how was that to be done? While he was puzzling over this question, the stranger from Virginia heard of the clever student just home from his college work, and asked him to go back with him to his home in the Southern State as tutor to his sons.

Without delay the matter was settled. The short visit at home ended, and another parting came. Francis was then a lawyer in Newport, and when his brother left he felt that most of his own joys had gone with him. Mrs. Channing found again how much she relied upon the advice and help of this younger son, and it seemed harder than ever to her to say good-bye to him. A storm raged round the island after he had gone. As she listened to the high winds, and the roaring

of the great billows breaking on the rocks at the coast, she felt very sad. Before long, however, came a letter from him safe at his journey's end, and her heart grew lighter at each loving word that she read.

It was October when William went to Virginia. All the valley was red and golden with autumn tints, and the meadows by the river side were full of beauty. He met with great kindness from Mr. Randolph and his friends, and, at first, this new life in Virginia seemed like Paradise to the youth of nineteen. But before long a sadder aspect showed itself. He watched the slaves, and saw all the miseries that loss of freedom brings. Slavery was a fearful evil in the land, and did as much harm to the white slave-owners as to the poor black people whom they bought and sold. By-and-by he grew weary of the hospitable Richmond society and the gay life of his new friends, for the same evil influences that had spread abroad among the students at Harvard were to be found in Richmond. Moreover, the hours of study which he fixed for himself filled up most of the time not needed for his pupils' lessons.

Mr. Randolph had made an outbuilding into a school-house for his sons and some other boys who studied with them. In this building William Channing slept at night, and as the weeks went on he spent more and more time in quiet reading to make ready for his college work yet to come.

Far into the night, when even the tired slaves were sleeping, he used to write and think; and, lest he should fall into any of the luxuries of the southern life about him, he accustomed himself to sleep on the bare boards. Not content with this hardening process, he often rose and paced his room in the cold nights that he might learn to bear suffering and privation as bravely as any of the ancient Greek and Roman heroes whom he admired so much.

There was, however, little fear that he could fall into a selfish, idle life. Love for his mother and the longing to help her still filled his mind. He would take no money from her for clothes, and most of his salary as tutor was needed to buy the books he had to read. With his poor garments, society, if he wished for it, was soon out of the question for him. He had not even an overcoat when the winter came. On Christmas Day a merry party met in Mr. Randolph's house. All would have been glad to have the clever young tutor with them, but he knew that his shabby coat was not fit for such gay doings, and he spent the festival in his lonely outhouse. Then, indeed, he was homesick. He looked towards the north where his dear island home lay, and thought of all the friends so far away who were longing for him, as he was for them.

Perhaps it was a relief when the Christmas holidays were over, and the voices of the merry

boys put to flight the silence of his room by day. He looked very young, with his slight form and boyish face, and people sometimes doubted his power to control such a large company of mischief-loving lads. But *they* felt, no less than others had done, his firm will and steady principle, and followed all the counsels of the youth who was yet so little older than themselves.

One day, a poor, old coloured woman came to the school-house to complain that her garden fences were broken and her flowers spoiled by the mischief of the scholars. When she saw the young tutor who came to listen to her complaint, she had no hope of redress.

'Are *you* de massa, you little ting? You can't lick 'em. They put you out ob de window!' and so saying she turned sadly away, regardless of his promise that her garden should never again be hurt by his thoughtless boys. Yet the old lady found, to her joy, that the promise of the 'massa,' whose youthful looks she despised, was kept more faithfully than that of many older and stronger-looking white men, and the boys never ventured on her little plot of ground again.

Meanwhile, startling news came over from France. William Channing heard it eagerly, and watched for each fresh account, and pondered over it with sad heart as he rambled over the hills and fields near Richmond. Napoleon Bonaparte had by this time risen into power. For three or four

years past he had been carrying on the fierce wars which followed the great Revolution. Thus he had roused the French people to constant warfare and conquest, and had filled Europe with bloodshed and false notions of glory and renown. At length, in this year, 1800, he had made himself Consul and Master of France, and it was plain that there could be no peace on earth while he lived till he had made himself conqueror over all the lands within his reach.

William Channing knew well what these great conquests meant. He knew that behind them lay crushed freedom, ruined homes, and orphaned children: idle, reckless criminals, and the loss of all faith in God and love for man. War became in his eyes as great a crime as slavery. Such a state of things might be well enough in the sight of those who believed the world to be cursed and all men far away from God. But to him, clearly as on the summer day in the Harvard meadow, shone out the certain faith that all human beings are made in the image of their Father, and meant for perfection.

Then, by day and night, he began to think of a perfect society which *must*, in time, make its way upon the earth, when all men should live together in peace and freedom. His letters were filled with such thoughts, and his lonely walks were brightened by such happy visions. Tidings of war might reach him from the outside world, slaves might

meet his gaze when he walked abroad, and unbelief and wickedness might greet him among the townspeople of Richmond; but in his own soul these day-dreams were clear and bright, and he *knew* that some day they *must* come true.

Was William Channing going to content himself with visions and hopes? Was he only going, after all, to be a dreamer? His grandfather, Mr. Ellery, and his brother Francis were afraid of this, and they wrote to rouse him from his slumber.

There is a grand old story which tells us how some such glorious day-dreams once visited a great-souled man[1] in Jerusalem more than 2,000 years ago. Filled with joy, this man pictured to himself the day when the whole earth should be full of the glory of the Lord. But to live in these visions was to live in selfish ease. Rousing himself to see the real sin and misery about him in the world, he knew that only the hard fight of men against wrong could bring about the good time he longed for; so he cried, 'Here am I, Lord, send me!' and rose up to spend his life in doing all the good he could, and working against the wickedness around him.

All at once, William Channing, in those days of slavery and war, woke up to find himself a dreamer of what *might* be, instead of a brave worker. He, too, like the hero in Jerusalem, must do something to mend the world and help

[1] Isaiah.

on the grand time he saw in his visions. Solemnly he gave himself up to this work. Like a brave knight of old he would go out into the world with his ideal always kept clearly in view. In his lonely school-house, with no money and no prospects, he, too, cried, 'Here am I, Lord, send me!'

In a little while joyful news came to the old home at Newport that William was coming back again. A plan was made for him to prepare his younger brothers for college, and Mr. Randolph promised to send one of his own boys to learn with them. Harvard Divinity school would, at all events, be at a less distance from William Channing in Rhode Island than in Virginia, and thither he must find his way before he could become a preacher and give his message to the world.

In July, 1800, he set sail on his homeward voyage. To save expense, he chose a little sloop that was used to carry coal. The captain and the crew drank and ran her upon a sand-bank. The boat was damp and leaky, and she lay upon the bank till the next tide lifted her off and carried her into the open sea again. William was worn out and ill. Twenty months had passed since he had left Rhode Island a happy, healthy youth. He came back greatly changed. Long hours of study and broken rest, insufficient clothing and loneliness, had left him a sad invalid. It was to be hoped that the fresh sea breezes on the beach he loved so much might bring back his lost health and cheerfulness.

CHAPTER V.

WAITING.

THE dwellers in sea-girt Rhode Island might well say that no finer sight was to be found than that of the huge Atlantic waves breaking in storm with the roar of thunder on the grand cliffs of their coast. From the Channing homestead the way to the beach lay past the old rope-walk and the snug farms on the common, to a point whence a steep path led down from the top of the cliff to the sea-shore at their base. Wonderful places were to be found among those cliffs. Secret winding paths led bold climbers in one part to a rocky amphitheatre. There, brilliant stones set in the rocks, wet with spray and shining in the sun, made the place like the opening grotto into a fairy palace. Close by lay mighty headlands, with a distant view far over the ocean. Beyond these headlands cliffs that the sea-birds loved; but on which, too often, ships were wrecked within sight of home, with no chance of help from land.

There were quieter reaches of shore also, where

the water played softly in sheltered bays. Yet best of all, William Channing loved the headlands and the grand waves rolling in storm upon the shore. There, sometimes, he would stretch out his arms and rush to meet the wind and spray, and rejoice with all his heart in the freedom of the lonely beach.

Never once did he look back with regret on the rare foliage and luxuriant landscape he had left behind him in the Southern States. Far dearer to him were the bare common and wild sea-shore to which he had been used when a boy. How welcome was the change from the lonely school-house, where he had spent his days and nights of late, to the old home where every one was so full of joy at his return!

Truly, his presence soon proved itself a blessing in the house. The eldest brother, Francis, was at this time settled at Cambridge as a lawyer. The younger boys were high-spirited lads, full of fun and frolic, who sometimes needed more guidance than their anxious, weary mother had time or strength to give. Straightway William became their tutor and companion. He saw, too, just the counsel his sisters needed, and was more like a father than a brother to the little flock. Once again there was a head to the house, though now it was a mere youth who filled the post. Every one went to him for advice and help; and when the mother was sad and careworn it almost seemed

to her like a return of her lost husband's tenderness when this good son, putting his arm round her, cheered her with the whisper that all would be well.

Meanwhile, he had his own sorrows to bear in secret—the weary, almost hopeless waiting for a chance to carry on his college work, together with the nervous illness which made him scarcely able to keep back cross words and angry looks. No one knew of his daily struggle to seem sunny and contented. He made a vow that he would never become a minister till his temper was always under perfect control. At this time he formed several rules for the guidance of his life. One of these rules was never to *wait* for chances of doing good, but to look out for them on every hand; to remember that he could help others by what he said as well as by what he did; and to consider each day lost on which he had done no kind act. It was still only the 'day of little things' for William Channing. There was no chance for him to preach, no world waiting eagerly to listen to the grand truths he wished to teach; but the vision that had visited him in the Harvard meadow was still clear as ever to his mind, and amid the small duties of daily life he remembered that men are meant to become saints and angels if they will.

Among other buildings in Newport which the English soldiers had injured was the Redwood Library. It had been used as a barrack for the

troops, and still bore traces of their ill-usage. Within it were many old books of great value. In this library, William, pen in hand, used to read whenever a spare hour came, then clear his thoughts by writing what he had read. His mother made a study for him, also, in the little room at home that had been his father's office. There he used to read till late at night, glad of the quiet time which the days, filled with the claims of other people, seldom gave.

The light which had surprised William in his boyhood still shone each night from Dr. Hopkins's study window across the garden fence. The good old man, in his strange dress of red cap and wig and green robe and girdle, still rode about Newport; and he still preached on Sundays in the meeting-house across the fields. Now, for the first time, William, who had stood in awe of him when a boy, learned to know his true worth. Many long talks did the old minister have with the young student, who found, in truth, that the old man was 'better than his creed.' Slaves were still bought and sold in Rhode Island, and it was rare to find a merchant, like William's grandfather, who thought it wrong to make money in that way. Some of the rich slave-owners went to Dr. Hopkins's meeting-house. Careless of offending them, as he was sure to do, and thus losing their support, he preached boldly against the crime of slavery, and never waited to weigh his words or to think of the result to himself.

To meet with this fearless, conscientious man was a great gain to William Channing. He had begun to long, above all things, for liberty on earth; liberty for the slaves, liberty from such a cruel conqueror as Napoleon, and liberty for each person to carry out the thought God put into his mind. No wonder he loved the lonely beach and the free billows breaking on the rocks; no wonder he liked, as he stood there, to think of the early settlers of his native Rhode Island State.

For history told how, two centuries before his time, six wearied rowers in a little open canoe had sought there a refuge from the threats of persecuting Puritans. It was a strange company that landed from the canoe: five Indians and an Englishman, whose name was Roger Williams. He had been wandering for months among the Indians, after his own countrymen, the Pilgrim Fathers, had driven him away from the home they had already made for themselves in the New World. For the truth was that those Puritans, who had fled but a few years before from persecution in England, had themselves begun to persecute; and when Roger Williams, joining their little company, preached liberty of conscience for every man, they drove him out into the wilderness to make a new home for himself. The friendly Indians gave him land and shelter for a time, then, when fresh disturbances arose with neighbouring white men, he and five of his Indian

companions rowed their frail canoe down the Pantucket River and across Narragansett Bay. They landed on that part of the coast of what was afterwards called the State of Rhode Island, and there founded a new colony with the promise of freedom of thought for every settler therein.

There was a grand old story out of the past, and the spirit of Roger Williams seemed to prophesy to William Channing the time when men should no more be bound to believe in a dreary, worn-out creed. But that day of freedom he knew that in some way he must work to bring about.

Meanwhile, Harvard College did not forget the promising young student she had sent out trained for the law. His change of plans was known there by this time, and when the office of Regent there became vacant, it was offered to William Channing, that he might be able to go back to Harvard and study for the ministry. Of course there were not two opinions about the matter. Such a chance must not be lost. Early in the year 1802 he again left Newport for Cambridge. This time he had a room in the college to live in ; for as Regent it fell to his lot to keep order in the building and among the students.

None of his old admirers boasted now of his future fame, or tried to make him leader in their college sports. It was noticed that he had lost his firm step, and his buoyant, genial manner had become so quiet and serious that the merry students

felt awed in his presence. But to those who were in trouble he was like an angel of comfort, and he showed the tender ways of a woman when he went to visit any who were ill.

In return for his services as Regent, he could now study free of cost, and he showed himself as hard a worker as ever. Francis Channing was settled at Cambridge, and the two young men found their happiest hours in long walks together through the lonely woods of Mount Auburn and to the top of Prospect Hill. They had many subjects to talk over. Clear words would be needed from a preacher in those days, for still, on the one hand, lay doubt and unbelief, and, on the other hand, the gloomy popular creed. To preach clearly, William Channing knew that he must have clear thoughts. By degrees he was finding out what seemed to him most true on all points of doctrine. Often did he seem to himself to be quite unfit for the high work that lay before him. Then his brother Francis gave him new courage, and a talk with this wise elder brother cleared his doubts away.

At length the day came when his work of preparation was over. William Channing was free to go forth to preach. To his mind a man's life was more important than his creed, and he knew that as he grew older he would grow wiser, and that more and more light would be shed upon the faith he then held. But of the changeless truth of some ideas

he was quite sure. He knew that the loving Heavenly Father meant to perfect the human soul, to fill it with His own spirit, and to raise it to life and immortality; and he knew that this was the great purpose of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, His Son.

Soon came two calls to him from churches in Boston. One was a large church, where many people would come to listen to him every Sunday. The other was a small wooden church in Federal Street, Boston, that had no name in the town, where only a handful of listeners gathered together. He chose the latter church; and on a June morning, 1803, when he was twenty-three years old, he was ordained as minister in the gloomy, unpretending building. Old friends met there on that day, visitors from Harvard, his uncle from New London, with whom he had lived for two years when a boy; and an old college companion also, who was dear to him, was there to welcome William Channing to his new life. This was Joseph Tuckerman. Weary of the aimless life he had led at Harvard, Tuckerman was now working hard in a small country parish, and his warm heart was longing for some call to help the wretched outcasts dwelling in the crowded parts of great cities. So he was ready to wish his old friend joy, and would have been glad, indeed, if he could have known that in a few years he also would live and work among the poor people in Boston.

The great step was taken. William Channing had begun his chosen work in life. His mother, parting from him, said sadly—'Now William, I must give you up.' But her fears were groundless. No duty was ever dearer to him than to fulfil the claims of his home life, and to take loving care of his mother.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG MINISTER.

A SMALL seaport town, with only about 26,000 inhabitants, and bright with gardens and orchards. Such was Boston in the year 1803.

It was a pleasant place to live in, with its fresh sea-breeze and its open common, where the townspeople fed their cows by day. A town with a great name too. People called it the 'modern Athens,' for it was the home of learned men, and preachers lived there whose eloquence made them famous.

But Boston had another side. Away from the orchards and gardens and homes of the rich and wise lay the small, crowded quarter of the town where the very poor people lived; those whom war had ruined, and those who had sunk to beggary and theft.

Now came William Channing to this small seaport town. He was known as the hard-working student from Harvard, who had been at one time the first scholar in his class. Surely the 'Modern

Athens' would welcome him, and he would find a useful, happy life with learned men; such a life as would suit his worn-out health and his love of quiet? Not so! The new-comer did not wait to ponder what Boston expected, or to shape his plans most easily to himself. His only thought was to satisfy his conscience, and be true to God. He looked to the poor, sinful quarter of the town, and knew that *there* was to be chiefly his field of work; and he vowed to try to make Boston a true 'city of God,' where crime should be unknown.

A parsonage belonged to the small wooden meeting-house in Federal Street, of which he was to be the minister. At first it stood empty; for he lived with some members of his congregation. A sad hermit he seemed to them, grave and silent, hurrying through his meals, and spending most of his time in his own room. But a change was to come. William Channing's life, hitherto, had had no startling events in it; but the memories of certain times when he had felt deeply were clear to him. One of these memories was that of a day twelve years before, when his father lay dead in the old home at Newport, and he and Francis, two mere boys, had agreed that the one who could first manage to do so should make a new home for their mother. What a happiness that it now fell to his lot to keep and take care of her. His stipend as minister should add to her narrow

income, and his parsonage should be her new abode.

So, before long, there came a letter from William Channing to Newport, and in it the happy mother read that her son's parsonage was too large for him, that he had more fuel than he could burn, and that he needed her and all his brothers and sisters to make his life happy, and take care of him. Thus, in his loving way, he made it seem that the benefit would be all on his side; and when they came, the mother and the large merry family, the smallest room in the house was all he kept for his study; and, for his bedroom, he shared with one of the younger boys an attic without a fireplace, where the biting, frosty wind in winter made its way in through window and roof.

There was never a selfish deed in William Channing's life. Except the money he needed for books and to help his poor people, all the stipend he received was given to his mother. No wonder that his clothes were still often threadbare, but so neat was he that this passed almost unobserved. His sister Ann by this time had grown up to young womanhood. She was sweet and gentle, and a great treasure in the house. For the sake of his sisters he tried to throw off his hermit-like ways, and took them into society, and welcomed the friends they asked to their own home. At such times his influence was felt by all present, and the

talk became more earnest because he was by, and no one dared to speak an unkind word of any absent person. He read to his sisters and watched over their ways, even thinking of little matters, such as the pocket-money they needed. As for the merry boys, their mirth was never checked because the grave, elder brother was wearied, and longed for quiet. Indeed, he was often ill, but always patient through everything; and no more tender son was to be found than William Ellery Channing. Such was his home-life; but such a life was not led without many a secret struggle.

Meanwhile, the little meeting-house in Federal Street, with its once scanty congregation, began to fill. People who had heard William Channing preach once were ready to walk many miles to hear him again. Yet all he said was simple—no startling creed—only two or three ideas over and over again in different form, such as the tenderness of God, the perfect character of Christ, and the possibility of perfection like unto his for each human being. 'Would that I had a voice to reach your souls, to convince you of that which God has designed you for,' he cried one day; and, as men listened to him, the fearful, gloomy creed they had been brought up to believe faded from their minds, and fresh aims and hopes took its place. His words seemed part of himself; no one could help listening to him, for the great principles of which he spoke were the life of his own soul. Even

children could follow what he said, and tried in good earnest to cast aside their faults and bad habits, when he told them of the angels God meant them to become.

One day, for the first time, a young girl heard him preach. She had fallen into untruthful habits, and had lost the clear view of right and wrong. As she heard his earnest warning to his people not to silence the inward whispers of God, she remembered how often she had tried to stifle the voice that still spoke within her soul. From that day, she not only never told another falsehood, but she never made excuse or prevaricated again. His wonderful voice in its lowest tones could reach the dullest heart. As he preached a deep silence used to rest upon the church, and one of the orators of Boston said of his sermons, 'A new era of preaching has begun.' It was soon plain to all that a large new church must be built to take the place of the old wooden building. Yet still he lost heart at times, and thought he was of little use. Then his brother Francis was again his comforter, and bade him work bravely on.

And what of the poor people in the town? Was Boston any nearer being a city of God because William Channing lived there? The answer to this question is soon given. He brought a new influence to work in the management of schools and prisons: helped to set on foot model houses and reading-rooms for working-men. Public bake-

houses, refuges, all sorts of good works were taken up and carried on by him, and public spirit soon began to follow where he led. His grand idea was that every human being, however low he had fallen, still had the spirit of God within that might be roused by help and hope into a glorious life. He began to work just where he was. Whatever his hand found to do that he did, asking for no larger sphere than that of minister of the humble wooden church. By degrees, fresh ways of usefulness opened out to him, till, at last, as we shall see, his influence spread far over the ocean, into distant lands.

In his wanderings among the lost, helpless dwellers in Boston, he one day came upon two old people living on a small parish allowance in the worst part of the city. They were both insane, and, for fear of being poisoned, had begun to refuse to eat. But at the sound of his gentle voice they trusted him at once, and let him give them food. For years afterwards, if in Boston, he visited them once a day and fed them with his own hands; or, if unable to go to them himself, he never failed to send the deacon of his church, whom they learned also to trust. Truly, William Channing never despised humble things. It was said of him that 'he converted the common pursuits of life into a means of piety, and made them a way to heaven.'

Now, while he was in the midst of his work among the poor castaways of Boston, looking on

them all as future angels with the seeds of heavenly beauty in their hidden souls, he heard of an English poet who was telling in his poems this thought, which was so dear to himself, of the worth in lowly things. And this poet was William Wordsworth.

Just ten years before the birth of the Rhode Island boy, whose story we are now reading, an English child had been born in the quiet village of Cockermouth, among the lonely mountains of the lake country. The small village school gave him his first training, and his play hours were spent in rambling over the hills and through the woods. Early in the morning and late in the evening, watching sunrises and sunsets, he learned to love more and more each day the quiet country scenes in which his lot was cast. But time passed, and he was sent to Cambridge to study. Then, after a few years, a little before the time when William Channing in America met at Harvard with the wild, wicked influences of the French Revolution, William Wordsworth crossed the Channel to Paris, and lived for a while right among the horrors and turmoils of that time. Then, like William Channing, he watched the rise of Napoleon's power, and the loss of liberty in Europe that followed his conquests.

Sick at heart, and filled with shame for all the evils he saw, and puzzled with problems which no vision came to solve, he went back to the country scenes in England, and found peace again among

the quiet beauties of Nature and the simple ways of unlearned people.

But his mind was deeply stirred by all he had seen and heard; and after a time, out of his sheltered home, into all the doubts and tumults of a busy world in which men were living, came Wordsworth's poems. They told of the steadfast laws and quiet beauty of Nature, of the grandeur in lowly things, of the graces to be found in the common sights and sounds of earth, and of the true worth of plain living and high thinking. *There* was a contrast to the false ambition and blind doubt of the age. These poems came over to America, and William Channing read them with a glad heart in the midst of his work amid sad city scenes.

In the same year, 1803, when William Ellery Channing came to Boston, was born there Ralph Waldo Emerson, a boy destined to become a famous man. As he grew older, people used to see this boy in the evenings driving his mother's cows back from the Boston common. Those who cared to inquire more about him would have heard that he worked well at school, and that in his father's house, where there was a large family, and they were poor, he learned to be truthful and unselfish. People who looked closely at him saw that he had a spiritual face, and that though he was gentle in manner he was not without energy. Yet he showed no special promise in early boyhood of future greatness.

In course of time William Channing, with his wonderful influence, began to come to Waldo Emerson's home. Sometimes he spent an evening there, and his talk sowed seed in the boy's mind, which bore fruit afterwards. For, by that time, William Channing was a lover of Wordsworth, and he used to talk in the Emersons' parlour of his newly-found poet, and to read to his friends some of the simple poems which gave such clear glimpse into a grand spiritual life. And Waldo Emerson listened to the talk and the poems. By-and-by the boy left Boston for a while, but came back to the same influence again; and in after years, Dr. Channing, in ripe old age, said of the famous Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom he had known and helped so much in his earlier life, 'I do not know that he says anything new; but he inspires me.'

During all the earlier period of Mr. Channing's life in Boston, terrible news kept coming from Europe of Napoleon's victories. He made himself Emperor of France, no longer First Consul, and in 1810 was at the height of his power. In that year, William Channing preached his first sermon on war. Many people found fault with him for bringing into the pulpit the subject of Napoleon's ambitious and cruel conquests. And in those days there was again a breach between the United States and England, and party politics broke up old friendships, and differences of opinion

led to bitter words. Therefore, it needed great courage to preach freely on such points. But William Channing never listened to any voice but the inner whisper which told him he was right. He held that religion should enter into and make holy all the events and ways of life. For this reason he tried always to show his hearers how the spirit of Christ ought to rule their politics and their trade and all their dealings with their fellow-men. Now, the great question of war must be treated in the same way.

Four years later, in 1814, Napoleon was overthrown, and a great thanksgiving was held in Boston. Then William Channing was chosen to preach the sermon. On a June morning, hosts of thankful citizens filled the streets on their way to the church where the service was to be held. In the pulpit stood the worn-looking young man, whose face and form were so well known by that time in all parts of the city. Perhaps the first accents of his gentle voice hardly roused attention; but before long each person in the building was spell-bound, as the preacher spoke of the horrors of war and the blessings of peace and commerce. As he uttered the words, 'the oppressor is fallen and the world is free,' the excited listeners sprang to their feet with loud cheers. In another moment he stilled the uproar by his calm reminder that they were in the house of God.

While watching the course of events in the long

wars which had crushed the freedom and hope of so many innocent people, William Channing had learned to believe that only in a state of peace could human beings grow into the perfect life that God meant them to live. In his later years he thought all wars were equally wrong. At this time he did not say that there might not be rare cases when men would be more right in fighting than in keeping peace; but such wars as Napoleon had waged for greed and power were terrible crimes in his view, and degraded the souls of men.

As usual, he was not content with merely longing and waiting for a change. Once upon a time he had preached thus: 'Do not waste your breath in wailing over the times; strive to make them better'—and this was always his own state of mind. So now he asked himself what he could do to spread abroad a desire for peace; the result was that he asked a few thoughtful men to meet in his parsonage parlour—as many as the small room would hold—and there he founded the first Peace Society that America had known. And now came to his help some one whose short story must be told—who himself owed much to the former help of William Channing—this was the Rev. Noah Worcester. For many years he had been a minister in a country place, working on a farm by day, and at night eking out a poor living for his family as a cobbler. Yet, in those days, as he worked on his farm, he thought, and as he mended shoes he wrote

down these thoughts with the pen and ink that stood on a stool by his side. Some of the wise pamphlets he thus wrote were printed and went out into the world. In 1813 William Channing had found him on his farm, grey-haired, weary, and unknown. Then the young man took the brave old hidden worker by the hand and brought him to Boston, where he found for him the post of Editor to a magazine called the *Christian Disciple*. In 1816 the old man and the young man joined together to work in the cause of peace.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY.

THE HON. WILLIAM ELLERY, 'the Signer,' still lived at Newport, and watched with deep interest the life his grandson led in Boston. The fear he once felt that the youth's great aims might end in dreams lay far away in the past. *Now* the fear was lest the useful life might be cut short by overwork. Such a life as the young minister was spending during those early years in Boston is not easy to picture. One would have said that, with his broken health, quiet and rest were needful to him. No one would have blamed him if he had led the peaceful life of a student, which would have been really to his taste. But that tempting prospect he cast aside, and with his poor chances he became, before he died—

> 'God's great and crowning miracle,
> A hero and a saint.'

William Channing was not only the leader of good works in Boston. In the midst of his busy life, when he so much needed time for rest, he was

yet always ready to admit young and old into his quiet study. Obscure dwellers in the city, famous and learned men passing through Boston, whoever wanted help or advice, all were free to come to him. Yet there was no hurry in his life. He seemed to live on a high plane of thought above his fellow-men, never to lose sight of a grand ideal of duty; and always he was listening to the inner voice of God, and ready to follow wherever it might lead.

Meanwhile, cares and even heavy troubles visited his own home. But amid all the changes of life he was serene, and the little worries that sting smaller souls to impatience seemed to vanish before him.

Among the dearest friends of the family at the Parsonage had long been Washington Allston, whom they had known so many years ago, when Francis, Ann, and William Channing were all children together in their old home in Rhode Island. Washington Allston had become an artist in Boston, and the painting of each of his pictures was a great event to his friends. These pictures seemed to tell the same kind of message that William Wordsworth's poems at that time told—of the spiritual beauty lying behind mortal things. And this artist and lover of the beautiful found what he cared for so much in the gentle, unwearied Ann, who loved him in return. Then William Channing gave his sister to his dear old friend,

and the two sailed away together to Europe. But there, in a few years' time, she died, leaving a sacred memory with all whom she had known.

By degrees, the large family of young people left the home their brother had made for them, and went out into the world. The younger brothers settled in life: two of them as merchants and two in professions, and another sister younger than Ann, married in New York. But before all these changes took place a heavy trouble came. For Francis Channing, who had married some years before, and had led a busy life as a lawyer in Boston, broke down under the strain of his profession, and, accompanied by his young wife, was sent on a long voyage for rest and change. The two brothers had always been the closest friends. For William's life, without the advice and encouragement of his elder brother, would have been very hard to live. Now, for a time they were parted, with the hope of meeting again.

But this hope was not to be fulfilled on earth. One Sunday morning news came to Boston that the traveller had died of hæmorrhage on his outward voyage. Some one went to tell his brother. William Channing heard the news silently, and parted from the messenger with a pressure of the hand. How would he bear this sudden blow? In the silence of his own study he found faith and peace and strength to break the sad news to his mother. Even in this great grief he thought of

others rather than of himself, and wrote in his journal: 'My mother is now more than ever to be my care; I am now her eldest child.' And it is told of him that when at last he called the family together, 'his face was as serene as if he were a messenger of joy.'

His next act was to write to his brother's widow, on her return from her long absence, and bring her and her young children to the parsonage, to be comforted by his mother and himself. There they lived for a time, and this is the picture the widow drew of her new home:—

'While I am cheered by William's presence and conversation I can bear everything cheerfully. It would be impossible to give you a full impression of the happy influence which he exerts. At his approach all trials and perplexities disappear; every feeling but that of kindness vanishes; nothing is seen but smiles, nothing heard but conciliating and loving words. We not only seem, but feel as human beings should, and I verily believe if I was always in his presence I should never say or do anything inconsistent with the purest principles of Christianity. He is constantly occupied, but his leisure moments are devoted to us, and you would be pleased to see how the children love him. They are fond of all their uncles, but William is the decided favourite. They run to him the moment he opens the door, and he can seldom get away, except by stealth. Their highest

reward for good conduct is a visit to his study, and their greatest punishment the denial of a game of romps or of a story from their Uncle William.'

In the year 1816, when his young brothers and sisters were settled in life, and his mother's cares for them at an end, William Channing married his cousin, Ruth Gibbs. Perhaps he had long loved her, for they had been playmates in childhood. If so, no one knew it, and the natural wish for a quiet home of his own had been put aside, that he might fill his father's place. He settled near his mother, and as long as she lived, while he was in Boston, never failed to visit her each day, and watch over her with the most tender care.

Partly owing to the wonderful influence of Mr. Channing's preaching, partly to the inquiring spirit of the age, many persons in and round Boston had cast off by degrees the creed handed down from Puritan times, and now held quite another form of faith. These new thinkers called themselves Unitarians; for they believed in the Unity of God, not in the Trinity—three persons in one God. Such was the meaning of the name they took. But they also said that the popular creed could not be true which taught that all men were born sinful and cast-away because of Adam's sin, and that only a few chosen by God long before their birth were to be saved from hell by the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. Those doctrines which they had learned

to doubt were just what William Channing had listened to with boyish horror as he sat by his father's side in the village meeting-house in Rhode Island many years before. It was well for Boston that he had puzzled over his doubts in boyhood, and that the vision of clear truth had visited him when at college in his youth. Best of all, that he had never let this vision fade away out of his own soul: but through difficulties and trials he had made it clear to others through his word and by his life.

Still he had never united himself with any sect in the Church, nor adopted any party name. His aim had always been to preach what was true and to say little about error, hoping that by this means it would pass away as shadows fade before the light. For his own part he tried to find good everywhere, and held that Christians should be known by rightness of life and temper, not by any special creed. Therefore, instead of preaching against the popular doctrines, he spent his time and strength in telling what seemed to him truer and happier views of religion, and though on one or two subjects he differed somewhat from some of the Unitarians in Boston, he did not care to argue about them when their points of union were so important, and the truths they held in common so grand. In this short story of his life it is needless to tell all the minor details of his faith; indeed, they changed somewhat as years went on; but

time brought no change in his belief in the perfect love and holiness of God, in the Divine origin and possible perfection of every human soul, and in the perfect character of Jesus Christ, the pattern of what all men by the grace of God's indwelling spirit might become.

Such were the thoughts he had been preaching week by week in his crowded church. They spread every day far beyond his church's walls, and men were learning from him to think nobly of God, and nobly of their own nature too. It was wonderful how, while his earnest voice roused men from an old creed to a new one, he yet lived in peace and good-will with all who did not agree with him.

But suddenly a change came. The old spirit of persecution broke out in the land, as if the Puritan Fathers had come to life again. In the month of June, 1815, a statement was made in a magazine called the *Panoplist* that these new Unitarian opinions were crimes, and that those who held them were heretics, with whom no one should have any dealing, because they left on one side the saving clauses of the New Testament, and acted as hypocrites, spreading their faith in a cunning and deceitful way.

These were among the first words of a great dispute which lasted many years. The outcry was bitter, and the conflict ran high. It spread through New England, and across the sea, in the Old World, the tale was told.

William Ellery Channing was a quiet minister; a lover of peace and unity. He had tried to make people *feel* good and *do* good, and shrank from disputes about religion. But he had not spent his boyhood with the free winds and waves of the Rhode Island shore in vain; the old influences of Roger Williams' spirit were still upon him, and he had a 'boundless faith in freedom.' Better anything than that men should be forced by persecution to pretend to believe what they did not believe; or that they should fear to use about religion the reason God had given them.

Only a little time for thought; then his course was plain. He said to himself that he must stand by the truth, no matter where it led him or how he fared, and this Unitarian form of faith was nearest to his ideal of the Christian Religion. Then he bade farewell to the peace he loved so much, and replied to the charges of the *Panoplist*. So he took upon himself the titles of 'Unitarian' and 'heretic,' and soon became the leader in an open contest against the popular creed. Men should not fail to understand the theology he preached; they should complain of his silence no longer, if it led to the charges of hypocrisy and deceit. 'Is God good?' he cried; 'if so, He cannot bring helpless beings to life, to doom them to eternal misery.' His sermons were printed and spread into distant States and across the sea. Ignorant settlers in far-off wilds, who were puzzled with

doubts they could not solve, read Channing's writings, and the goodness of God and the hope of Heaven dawned upon their thankful hearts.

In the year 1819 he preached a sermon at Baltimore, on 'Unitarian Christianity.' It is said that the church in which he then spoke was from that time as holy ground to the people who heard him. The fact was, he founded all he said on the simple words of Christ spoken 1,800 years ago, before Church Councils and the questioning minds of men had added to them puzzling dogmas of their own.

One after another fresh openings came to him to make known widely his religious creed. For the sake of liberty and truth he made use of all. Yet he could still truly say, 'I am little of a Unitarian,' because he held a faithful life of love far higher than any form of belief, and cared little for sects and parties compared with the grand thought that all men are children together in the family of God. And so it came to pass that this leader of the Boston heretics brought a new spirit into religious controversy. He did not dispute over the meaning of texts, and wrangle about points of doctrine. He tried to bring back to men a living Christianity, and in three or four great ideas to teach them of a God whom they could love and reverence, and to give them boundless faith in their own souls and in the grace of God.

The world was now his work-place, not the city

of Boston alone; for his writings were translated and read eagerly in foreign lands. But the widening interests in his life never led to the neglect of any duty, however small. New buildings were added to his Church, that new schemes of work might be carried out, and he was still ready at any hour with comfort and counsel for the lowliest person in the town. Harvard University about this time, grateful for his help and interest in her concerns for years past, gave him the title of Doctor of Divinity, and a call came to him to become minister of a large Church in New York. But he had still work to do in Boston, and the invitation was declined.

It gave little surprise to his friends when, in the year 1822, his feeble health quite broke down, and a year's rest and voyage to Europe was advised. By this time he had three little children, two boys and a girl, and his home was a very happy one. It was a great trouble to his wife and himself to think how soon the ocean must lie between themselves and all they held dear. But to make the journey was the only chance of saving his life, and his work was not half done.

Then came the voyage and the long stay in Europe. Together the husband and wife visited lakes and mountains, and wonderful old cities, and made the friendship of famous men, whose names had been known to them for years: the poet Wordsworth, in his quiet home among the English

Lakes, and many great thinkers and workers in England and Germany. While they were still abroad their youngest boy died, and news of other losses reached them. At length their homeward voyage was begun. Eagerly they watched towards its close for the first sight of their native land. Each day, as the ship neared America, Dr. Channing's longings grew stronger for his home, his mother, and his work, and when the dim outline of the coast greeted his straining eyes, he wrote thus in his journal:—

'I have just seen *land!* Blessed be God, in a few hours I hope to meet my friends. What thanks are due! Let me now, on approaching shore, humbly propose in God's strength that I will strive to do His will more perseveringly; to be more useful, watchful, temperate, kind, devout than ever before. I am returned to my friends; let me be more to them than I have yet been; more attentive, thoughtful, social, seeking their cheerfulness, interesting myself in their concerns. Especially let me be more to my mother.'

CHAPTER VIII.

'ALWAYS YOUNG FOR LIBERTY.'

A HUNDRED years ago John Wesley used to preach in England under the open sky, and eager people flocked to listen to him from the towns, or from their lonely homes among the hills. Such a preacher would Dr. Channing gladly have been in America. With his wonderful power over men he would have drawn them from the city streets and dreary homes to hear his glad gospel, if his strength had only been enough for such a work. They were often in his thoughts, those poor city dwellers in Boston, the thieves and drunkards and wastrels, who needed constant help so sorely. He thought often, too, of his friend Dr. Tuckerman, longing for more work than his parish could give him; and, on his return from Europe, Dr. Channing did not rest till his friend had been made minister to the poor in Boston.

By slow degrees his own weakness increased. It became at length needful for the Federal Street Church to find a second minister to help him in

his parish duties, and preach for him, when he was unfit to do so himself. The Rev. E. S. Gannett was chosen for this post. Perhaps, for Dr. Channing's own sake, his friends would have been glad to see him leave his work in Boston altogether, to pass his life in a quiet country home. But the tie between himself and his people was too strong to be broken while he had any health and strength to use for them. But he began to spend some time each summer in Rhode Island; and during those visits to the country he wrote the thoughts he had not strength to utter. Three essays by him on Milton, Napoleon, and Fénélon, published about this time, led the way to a better kind of literature than America had yet known, and caused men to think more wisely and deeply on many subjects. Now a hope dawned on Dr. Channing's mind of giving to the world before he died a great work on 'Man.' But one duty after another had to be done, important pamphlets had to be written, and his own best-loved scheme, as usual, was put aside when his help was wanted. And still he led the way in Boston reforms, and was the foremost worker in the town.

One week-day morning, in the year 1830, a large church was open in Boston for public worship. It was the great day of the annual election, and the governor and the chief magistrates went to the church in state. The building was filled from floor to roof. Soldiers in their uniform, with glit-

tering swords at their sides, made bright patches among the dark coats of the citizens. The preacher rose to speak to the mixed multitude. He was a worn, spiritual-looking man, and his fame had in part brought eager strangers to service on election day. It was Dr. Channing, he who years before had taken on himself the name of heretic, and preached against the popular faith of the time. *Now* Boston knew him as her prophet, and had learned that he had no narrower aim than to lead men onward to the truth as it opened out before him. What subject would he choose to-day for such a varied crowd? He chose that of 'Spiritual Freedom,' and governors, judges, soldiers and citizens listened in deep silence while he spoke of liberty to hear and follow the onward voice of God, of faithfulness to truth and duty, and of a grand aim for every one whatever his lot in life. The following were among the words he spoke :—

'I call that mind free which does not cower to human opinion, which feels itself accountable to a higher tribunal than man's, respects a higher law than fashion, respects itself too much to be the slave or tool of the many or the few. I call that mind free which, in this confidence in God and power of virtue has cast off all fear but that of wrong-doing, which no menace or peril can enthral, calm in the midst of tumults, and possesses itself though all else be lost. I call that mind free which resists the bondage of habit, does not mechanically

repeat itself, and copy the past, but forgets what is behind, listens for higher and new monitions of conscience, and rejoices to pour itself forth in fresh and higher exertions.'

But stern times were at hand, when a true prophet would have to speak unwelcome words, and Boston would no longer listen gladly to his voice. In the winter of that year 1830, to avoid the biting winds which blow to Boston over northern fields of ice, Dr. Channing went with his wife, who was ill, to Santa Cruz. This little island, far away from home, lay in the tropics bright with sunshine and gay with summer flowers. All day long the mild sea-breeze played gently round the sheltered porch where the husband and wife sat outside their house. Perhaps memories from his old life in Virginia came to Dr. Channing at Santa Cruz, for, full in view were the huts of the slaves who worked on the estate. Very soon the poor souls found they had a friend in him, and they told him sad stories of the hard lives they led. But he learned nothing new; all his life he had hated slavery. Yet of late years he watched with joy one State after another free its slaves, till there were seven free States out of thirteen in the Union.

Slowly, but surely, the spirit of Liberty seemed to be spreading. In time, he felt certain, the Southern States would follow the example set by the Northern, and the whole land would then be free. Dreadful as slavery was in his view, and

much as he loved freedom, he longed for a *peaceful* reform. The dark days of the Revolution, when men had gone to war for liberty, and filled the land with horror, lay far away in the past. But he remembered those days well, and such a time must not return. It was with these views that he went back to Boston in the spring of the year 1831.

He found a change there. Boston was no longer the quiet city he had left a few months before. There was excitement among the people, and bitter words were spoken among old friends. It was the question of slavery that had thus roused Boston, and an unknown, friendless youth, named William Lloyd Garrison, had wakened it there. This man was living in a poor, dark garret in the city, working day and night at a printing press that nearly filled his narrow room. By its means he was printing a paper called *The Liberator*, and publishing in it brave words against the crime of slavery. Hosts of copies of this paper went out from the lonely garret every week. Whether the end were peace or war, he would be 'true as truth.' A stop must be put to slavery *at once*. This was the cry of *The Liberator*. A few people took up the cause, so the cry passed from the garret into the busy streets. But Garrison's friends were a mere handful, and the opposite party was strong. Some Boston merchants lived by means of slave-grown cotton from the South. They hated Garrison and his *Liberator*, and there was a strong

desire felt in the city that no breach should be made with the slave-owners of the Southern States.

Dr. Channing took a middle course on his return to Boston; he preached against slavery, and spoke his heart out, fresh from the sad scenes of Santa Cruz. He honoured Garrison for his brave, unselfish work, and no man in America would more gladly than he have laid down his life to free the slaves. But he could not join the Anti-Slavery party, and thus seem to uphold all the unjust and reckless deeds and words of some of its members.

Time passed; *The Liberator* made its way southwards, even into the very heart of the slave states. There, of course, it found no friends, and the demand went back that the publication of all such Anti-Slavery papers should be forbidden in Massachusetts. What would Boston men say to this? Should such a law be passed in their land? A committee was called to consider the matter, and Garrison had to leave his printing-press and to come before the committee. There he stood face to face with well-known, wealthy men, who had great power in the city counsels—he, a poor printer from an obscure garret, asking for freedom of speech to help an unpopular cause. Would any one dare to take his side, when it was so safe and easy just to stop the printing of his paper?

It was a gloomy day in Boston; a cold wind blew, and the rain beat against the windows of the committee-room. Surely not a day for an invalid

to venture out! The door opened. There stood Dr. Channing on the threshold of the room, looking at the group of people within. No one in the city was more admired and respected than he. On the committee sat men who honoured him, in whose regard he stood very high. So, when they saw him, there was a little stir among them, and room was made at once for him to take his place on the committee. Why did he still stand in the doorway? Was he listening, perhaps, for that inner voice which was more to him than all the counsels of men? A moment more and he had crossed the room to the place where Garrison stood —the most unpopular man in Boston—and he took the hand of the brave young printer, and sat down by his side.

It was plain what Dr. Channing meant. He did not only *preach* 'Free thought is God's best gift'; he took the side of free thought in his deeds. That day *The Liberator's* life was spared, and Boston did *not* crush liberty of speech to please the Southern States.

After this, Garrison's Anti-Slavery party increased; but still, as before, some wild spirits took up the cause. News came from other towns of the excited meetings that were being held, and of the harsh, strong language against the slave-owners that was being used. Dr. Channing could not approve of such modes of action. Sometimes he blamed the leaders of the Anti-Slavery Society, warning

them that such a state of things could only end in war, and add one crime to another. Thus he replied when they pressed him to join their party, and still he held aloof.

Now, it happened that one of those leaders of the Anti-Slavery party—the Rev. J. S. May—came to Boston just when tidings of the reckless acts of some of the so-called friends of freedom reached the city. He visited Dr. Channing, and the two men—both of them earnest lovers of liberty—talked of the subject that lay so near their hearts. Dr. Channing spoke of the news he had heard; and, in his gentle way, found fresh fault. The visitor sat silent for a time. He was no doubt thinking what a help to their cause this great man's name would be, and feeling the mighty influence of every word he spoke.

At last he replied thus: 'Well, Dr. Channing, God works with such instruments as He can find. He has called to the work mighty leaders of men, and they have not answered. We have come in from the hedges and ditches, highways and byways, and are here to do our work. Look to it, sir, for the work in the Master's vineyard will surely be done! Is it not time, sir, that you spoke?'

Perhaps the speaker almost wished his words unsaid. Dr. Channing was to him like a prophet among men, and how should *he* dare to blame one to whom the Divine voice spoke clearly? He waited meekly for a due reproof. Meanwhile,

thoughts passed quickly through Dr. Channing's mind. Had the time come when he must again take up work so distasteful to his nature, join himself to a party whose acts he did not approve, and enter so late in life into wrangling and dispute? Was God indeed calling him to be a leader against slavery? If so, who would answer more gladly to the call? The long silence was broken by these words: 'Brother May, I feel the justice of your reproof. I have kept silence too long.'

So that afternoon the Anti-Slavery cause gained a great leader, and so, once more, Dr. Channing showed the secret of his noble life. He did not 'silence the whispers of the soul.'

This new leader believed in no half measures. If a work was right, it must be done heartily. There was no looking back, no counting of the cost. At once he declared himself on the side of the unpopular party, and hoped, by his influence, to moderate the excesses over which he mourned. Straightway, he wrote a powerful book against slavery, which was widely read. It seemed to him that if all the horrors of the system were once clearly understood, a strong moral purpose must arise among men to crush out so vile a thing.

At this time strong friends were greatly needed by the cause of freedom. Its prospects were growing dark. Far away in the West lay the great waste lands of Texas, at present neither slave nor free. But thither Southern planters were flocking with

their slaves, and it was said that this fresh land would be added as a slave state to the Union, to balance the number of the States already free.

'Sooner break up the Union,' said Channing, 'than let the crime of slavery spread;' and he wrote such a letter to the Hon. Henry Clay, then President of the Colonization Society, that the land rang with his indignant words, and there was no new slave state in *his* lifetime.

But there were other dangers to be feared. The Press upheld slavery. Newspapers were fierce against Garrison and his friends. Daily the excitement grew hotter all over the States. The lives of anti-slavery lecturers were in danger, and their houses were mobbed. Still, Dr. Channing's quiet voice made itself heard amid the uproar. It mattered not that his friends turned coldly from him, that the Boston papers called him the 'Leader of a Revolution,' that the doors of his own Church were closed against him when he wished to use it in support of the Anti-Slavery cause. All this pained him; but did not make him swerve in the least degree from his course. If God had called him to give a message to the world, he would speak it, whatever might befall. Yet he uttered no hard words. Though he was always so brave in defending Right and Truth, he still deserved the name of 'Peace-maker.'

Now, there was a small town named Alton in the distant State of Illinois, built on the eastern

bank of the great Mississippi river. Yet, small as it was, Alton was torn by the same conflict that divided larger cities. A friend of Garrison's, Elijah P. Lovejoy, had set up a printing-press there, and, like that brave fellow-worker in Boston, he published a paper advocating the cause of freedom.

One day an angry mob broke up Mr. Lovejoy's printing-press. The damage was repaired; a second time the injury was done, and *again* repaired. The patient editor was at work, when threats reached him of another attack from the mob. Mr. Lovejoy and his friends made ready to defend the building and their lives. But that night the mob again proved too strong. The new printing-press was broken up and thrown into the broad river flowing beneath the office walls, and its brave owner was killed by the rioters. This news came to Boston. Then Dr. Channing, worn and ill, thanked God for the strength that was left him.

In Boston stands a great building, called Faneuil Hall, and it has a better name than this. Men call it the 'Cradle of Liberty,' in memory of some scenes acted within its walls. In that hall Dr. Channing, when he heard this news, resolved to call together the people of Boston to protest against such an outrage, and to defend the freedom of the Press. He wrote and signed a petition to the Mayor and Aldermen of Boston, asking for the use of the hall. It was refused. Public feeling

was against such a meeting, he was told. He knew it well. He knew that to meddle in this matter would bring scorn and hatred on himself. Friends begged him to desist. 'No,' he answered, 'a man ought not to talk of difficulty when he clearly sees the right.' So he did not rest until he gained leave to use the hall for the proposed meeting.

On the 8th of December, 1837, early in the morning, men gathered in the great building, till every standing place was filled. They clung to the window-sills, and pressed about the doors. On the platform were the few leading men in the town who were still willing to follow in the unsafe path where Dr. Channing led. He sat among them, his face glowing with zeal and hope, and before him swayed the vast excited crowd on whose votes so much depended. 'You seem to be the youngest man among us,' said a friend to him. 'Always young for liberty,' he answered, with a smile. He rose to speak and to propose twelve resolutions in favour of liberty of speech and for the Press. There was a great silence through the hall—every word was clearly heard. The resolutions were seconded. It seemed as if the listening multitude were of one mind.

But then uprose the Attorney-General for the State, a member of Dr. Channing's Church. Strong and cutting words he spoke in defence of the Alton mob. The easily-moved people

scarcely heard him to the end, before they broke out into loud applause. The resolutions must be put to the vote. Was the cause lost by the Attorney-General's brilliant speech? Suddenly, up from the surging mass of people in the hall an unknown youth sprang upon the platform and addressed the crowd. It was wonderful to watch the effect of his indignant words as he replied to the last speaker. Cries were raised to silence him in vain. His noble speech in defence of liberty carried the meeting by storm, and the great building rang with shouts of approval.

'Can you stand thunder?' said the chairman to Dr. Channing. 'Such thunder as this, in any measure,' he replied.

'Who is the bold youth?' was the question that went round the hall. He was only an unknown lawyer—young Wendell Phillips, just beginning life, who dared to oppose the Attorney-General of the State, and put himself on the side of right and justice, whatever might be the cost.

In the end the victory was won, and the resolutions were carried with triumph. It is said that strong men went home from that great meeting and wept as they had not done since they were children; for they knew how much had been at stake and how much was won. There are 'lays of ancient Rome,' and famous Old World stories which youths and maidens love to read in these modern days. They tell us of brave heroes leading

a forlorn hope and cutting a path to victory right through the enemy's ranks. But a grander victory than those the world boasts of was won that December morning, 1837, in Faneuil Hall.

As for the great leader, Dr. Channing, he went home to make ready for new struggles against wrong. No wonder that men marvelled at the zeal and courage in so worn a frame. No wonder they remembered his brave words spoken that day, '*Always young for liberty.*'

CHAPTER. IX.

'OAKLAND.'

NEWS of the victory in Faneuil Hall spread quickly, and gave fresh courage to the friends of freedom. Still more, Dr. Channing's support of their cause had this effect, that younger men sprang up, like Wendell Phillips, eager to follow where so grand a leader led.

Yet, though America was the land of his birth, Dr. Channing was a citizen of the world, and his heart was open to welcome the story of noble deeds wherever they took place. In the following year, 1838, such a story came from the West Indies, those sunny islands lying far away in the Atlantic Ocean. Some of these islands belonged to England, and in them, on August 1, 1838, eight hundred thousand slaves were then and there set free. Not long afterwards Dr. Channing attended a great meeting at Fall River, in Rhode Island, where he was then staying. This meeting was called for the purpose of giving thanks to God for this great event that had just taken place. That day he wrote thus to a friend :—

'Can this spirit stop, has it done its work? I feel more cheering hope than ever for my race. All fear seems to have left me. I confide in truth, in God, and in human nature more than ever. I want nothing but strength to enter with new life on my labours.'

The world knows Dr. Channing now as the friend of liberty and religion, and the doer of brave deeds in their defence. But his real greatness lay not so much in what he did as in what he was. For he was a man who had been 'true to the dream of his youth.' Long years ago in boyhood he had learned the secret of a noble life when the vision dawned upon him in the Harvard meadow of the true nature of a human soul—God's undying Spirit hidden in man. *There* was his great ideal that never faded—to be faithful to that inward Guide, 'to practise temperance and strive for purity of heart, that he might become a temple for the Spirit of God to dwell in.' So, in his presence people felt the influence of this spirit, and they began to believe in the Divine germ within themselves, and to have higher aims in life and to do nobler deeds.

Probably no man ever lived who was more reverent than Dr. Channing. To him there was no greater pain than to hear that any one spoke or thought lightly of the holy realities that he held so dear. Now at one time in Boston a trial was held in the Court House that greatly excited the

city. The prisoner, a man named Abner Kneeland, was charged with atheism and blasphemy. It was held that any one who could thus treat the most holy truths should be silenced in a city where men lived who loved and feared God. So he was found guilty, and sentenced to imprisonment.

But some persons thought that *opinions* ought not thus to be treated as *crimes*, and a petition for the prisoner's release was prepared. Dr. Channing, as one of the foremost men in Boston, was asked to sign this petition. What reply to the request would *he* make, who had so reverent a soul and who had spent his life in teaching those truths that Abner Kneeland dared to ridicule and deny? Dr. Channing replied that religion was too strong to be shaken by the scoffing doubts of any man, and needed no protection from the law. To silence the expression of opinion was unwise. No one knew where such a course might end; in a world where men differed so widely all freedom of speech might be forbidden. He had, of course, no sympathy with Abner Kneeland's views. But as was always his habit, he did not stop to ask what is expedient, but listened to the Voice that told him what was right. He knew that the outcast, so deaf at present to the whispers in which God speaks to men, would some day waken from his loneliness to find that the Divine love had been always at his side. Meanwhile, truth stood firm, and hurtful doctrines should be left to die away unnoticed.

So with these views Dr. Channing signed the petition, and by the deed he drew upon himself much abuse from men who could not understand the meaning of his act.

In a busy life the years fly fast. They were fleeting quickly with Dr. Channing. One by one dear old friends had passed and were passing from his side; his mother, Dr. Tuckerman, Dr. Follen, and many other noble souls whom he had known and loved. Therefore, he watched with joy a new generation rising up to fill the vacant places, and the older he grew the more he loved the society of young people.

Far in the past lay his early work in Boston. It had been begun in fear and trembling. Almost like a dream seemed the day when he had answered the charges of the *Panoplist* magazine, and had risen up to take the leader's place in the Unitarian controversy. Some of the fruits of his labour he could see. It filled him with joy to know that the happy, simple faith he had tried to preach had spread far and wide, and leavened the doctrines that men had held so firmly in his youth. Still he cared little for the *name* 'Unitarian,' desiring to escape from the narrow walls of a particular Church to live under the open sky in the broad light, following the truth meekly but resolutely, however lonely be the path.

Truly in thus 'following the truth' he had passed through more trials and dangers than fall

to the lot of most men; but every year he had grown happier than the last. Now all was sunshine and clear hope. But one thing he greatly wished: that the Unitarian faith which he had helped to spread should not settle down into a fixed, narrow creed. 'We have everything to learn,' he said, 'and the whispers of the Spirit shall lead us on to higher, newer truths.'

Now Dr. Channing was held in great reverence by the younger ministers in Boston and its neighbourhood. When he took part in any new scheme their attention was at once roused. This was the case when, about this time, he helped to form a society where old and young might meet together to talk over the new books and fresh ideas which were coming over to America from the Old World. So long as men did not lose their reverence and their love, Dr. Channing had no fear for the results of inquiry and free thought. The members of this new society called themselves 'Friends of Progress,' and each week they met to discuss all kinds of subjects, and to 'welcome every new gleam of light with joy.'

In the year 1840 Dr. Channing was sixty years old. Some men are still young at that age. This great leader and worker was worn in the service of his fellow-men. For years past he had never had a day free from pain. At sixty years of age the time had come when he found he must separate himself from his Church and people, and not even

spend the winters in Boston, as of late years he had been used to do.

In the centre of the island of Rhode Island, five miles from the town of Newport, there is a quiet country house called 'Oakland.' Strangers from distant lands visit it, for it was the home of Dr. Channing during the last years of his life. Round it lay a peaceful garden, wherein were winding walks and sheltered seats, and a sunny lawn where the fresh winds blew and the cloud shadows chased each other through the long summer days. Birds built their nests in the tall trees and sang their songs in safety. The house was always filled with visitors. Men and woman, tired with the work of life, came there to be refreshed; young people, and merry little children. All these Dr. Channing loved to see about him. In the intervals of his studious life he would wander with them in the garden, or meet them to talk and read in the house or on some pleasant garden seat. Sometimes he would invite some happy guest to drive down with him to the grand beach and visit the places that had been dear to him in boyhood.

Dr. Channing knew well how much he owed to the early years he had spent in his Newport home, and to the delights of the free winds and waves. It was this knowledge that had made him wish his own children to grow up among the sights and sounds of Nature, and so to spend the summers of their early years. This knowledge, as well as his

great love for children, made him glad now to see the little ones about him in his country home. 'Our days are very bright and happy,' he wrote once; 'the house is filled with children.' He watched them in their games and listened to their tales of joy and wonder as if he had been still a boy himself. 'The happiest age is about sixty,' he sometimes said with a smile; and truly the sad moods that had sometimes visited him in youth and middle life faded before the full sunshine of his old age. More and more he loved Nature; the music of the winds, the flying clouds, the flowers that grew by his doorstep, the free waves on the beach, the golden sunsets, all spoke to him of a heavenly beauty which seemed to him to fill the whole earth with its glory.

A few steps from his garden gate stood a small church, where the country people met on Sunday mornings. He liked their quiet worship, and sometimes joined them there. One day he preached to them, and in his gentle tones began with the words, 'This is a beautiful world.' To speak to the simple and unlearned was always a pleasure to him. A year or two before he left Boston he gave a lecture on self-culture to the young working-men of the city. It was printed, and, like his other writings, crossed the sea, and was read in many English homes. One day a letter came to him from some rough English miners, thanking him for this lecture, which had taught

them the treasures of their own minds, and given them a new hope to live for in their gloomy pit work.

'This is an honour, indeed,' said Dr. Channing, as he read the ill-spelt, badly-written message, while a letter of thanks written to him by order of a King lay almost unheeded on his table.

Meanwhile, in his peaceful resting-place, he was at work upon the great book which he hoped to leave behind him to the world. At this time, too, though he was no longer strong enough to be a leader in active life, men more than ever sought for the counsel of his ripe wisdom.

In Boston, the 'Friends of Progress,' whom he had advised to 'follow every gleam of light with joy,' were still meeting every week. Among them Ralph Waldo Emerson was bringing forth the noble ideas which he partly owed to the teachings of Dr. Channing in his earlier years. Among them, too, came Theodore Parker, speaking bravely out what seemed to him the highest truth. News reached Dr. Channing that the hard names of infidel and heretic were given to this lonely man, whose old companions were turning coldly from him, when they heard the message he had to give. Was Theodore Parker leading the world far astray when he told men that the present was as holy as the past, that God's word was not confined to the pages of the Bible, and that all the children of God might be

inspired like Jesus Christ? Dr. Channing had always spoken of the Divine germ in man, and of the boundless possibilities of perfection for every human soul: perhaps this new disciple was only carrying a little further his often-repeated words.

At all events, if Dr. Channing did not quite agree with Theodore Parker, he had long ceased to ponder the precise heavenly rank of Christ, or to consider of great importance the question of the inspiration of the Bible. These were matters of opinion which no one could settle, but there were truths about the pure loving life of Christ on earth, and the inbreathings of God's spirit in the human soul, on which all people could agree.

Therefore, still sure that 'free thought is God's best gift,' he welcomed this new earnest mind, and sent his love to Theodore Parker, saying, 'Tell him to preach what he thoroughly believes and feels—let the full heart pour itself forth.'

CHAPTER X.

FAREWELL.

AMONG the mountains of Massachusetts lies the small town of Lenox. There country people live their simple lives, and sow their seed and reap their harvests, and think little about the busy cities that lie beyond their sheltering hills; and there, upon the crest of a hill commanding a wide view, Dr. Channing spent his last summer on earth. Friends were about him, and he was happy in their society and in his work—still writing to the last the thoughts that filled his mind.

Here, too, on August 1st, 1842, for the last time, he spoke in public, and the town's people gathered together to listen. They heard from him the grand story of liberty given to 800,000 slaves in the West Indies on that day a few years before; and his last words to them were a prophecy of the new spirit of life which God would yet give to all men on the earth.

A few days later he set out for Brattleboro', Vermont, to visit his elder brother's widow, who

lived there. He rested for the night at Bennington, among the Green Mountains; but there he was attacked with typhus fever, and his relations gathered round him. For nearly a month he lingered, peaceful and happy, full of interest in all around him, and gladly welcoming the tales of noble deeds and the words spoken which his friends brought to him from the outside world.

'Do such people grow among us?' he once asked. 'Tell me, have you known many such spirits?'

'They are not a few,' was the answer; and with a happy smile he said, 'Earth, then, is very rich.' Often, during his illness, whether asleep or awake, his lips moved in prayer.

On Sunday, October 2nd, 1842, the watchers by him saw that the end of his earthly life was at hand. In the morning he listened to parts of the Sermon on the Mount, and said, 'I take the greatest comfort from these words; they are full of the Divinest spirit of our religion.' In the evening he lay with his face turned towards the mountains in the east. They stood all red and golden with the reflection of the setting sun. And so, with the evening glow upon his face, he entered into higher life.

'I have received many messages from the Spirit.' These were the last words Dr. Channing spoke on earth, and in them we have the key to his whole life.

It was arranged that the funeral service should be held in Boston; and surely no fitter place could be found than the Federal Street Church, where he had ministered for so many years, and of which he remained senior pastor till his death. A hushed and sorrowing assembly filled every part of the building. Not only did Dr. Channing's old friends gather there. Among them, mourning his loss, came men who had differed widely from his views, and who had been earnest opponents of his public work; and of these some were ministers who now took leading parts in the service. When this was ended, in reverent silence the whole assembly passed in slow procession before the pulpit beneath which the coffin stood, so that all might gaze for the last time upon the peaceful, saintly face.

With one accord all Boston joined in lamenting the loss of the great helper and lover of his race; and as this long train of mourners passed in carriages and on foot up Franklin Street, the bell of the Roman Catholic chapel was tolled in token of respect.

When the evening sky was bright with the glow of sunset, the hands of relatives laid him to rest beneath the sheltering trees of Mount Auburn, where, in youth, he had often wandered with the brother who had gone before him. A white marble monument, carved by his old friend, Washington Allston, marks the spot. But the

story of Dr. Channing does not end by the grave-side in Mount Auburn.

In the year 1880 a grateful world celebrated the day of his birth one hundred years before. Men of all lands, and languages, and creeds thanked God for William Ellery Channing.

And why? Because from early boyhood he had never silenced the whispers of his soul; and because he had taught men to know the love of God and to believe in the sacredness of their own nature and in the inward everlasting Law of Right in which God speaks to men.

THE END.

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